

Rediscovery of missing specimens once held at Vassar College, including the holotype of *Baudó Guan* *Penelope orton*

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Received 11 June 2012

In early 1874, Osbert Salvin and his wife were ready to depart from Guatemala, intending to visit California and New York before returning to England. Frustrated by undependable schedules of ships calling at Central American ports, they sailed to Panama and thence directly to New York. Taking advantage of the five weeks until their ship departed for home, they visited both public and private bird collections in the eastern USA, and Salvin (1874) reported on the highlights of what he saw.

One of the collections visited was that of Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. There Salvin was shown the collection by the newly appointed Professor of Natural History and Curator of the Natural History Museum, James Orton, who no doubt took pleasure in introducing the collection to such a famous visitor. Orton had recently led two expeditions to South America which yielded many specimens of new birds. By the time of Salvin's visit, Orton had already published a landmark book *The Andes and the Amazon* (1870) and an article on some of the Vassar rarities (Orton 1871a). Several new species were named by George Newbold Lawrence based on the specimens at Vassar. However, it was a large, dark guan taken on Orton's first trip that intrigued Salvin most.

On his return to England, Salvin (1874) named the large, dark bird *Penelope orton*. The name was based on a single specimen that Salvin found had been identified as *P. greayi* (= *P. marail*). Orton told him that it had been collected near Mindo, on the west slope of Volcán Pichincha, Ecuador, at 6,000–7,000 feet elevation. It was the first species of *Penelope* found in western Ecuador. Salvin noted that 'the white markings of the feathers of the chest of this species are inconspicuous, are confined to the pectoral region and do not extend to the back of the neck as in the allied species, *P. marail* and *P. greayi*.' On that first expedition



Figure 1. Holotype of Baudó Guan *Penelope orton*, New York State Museum, Albany (NYSM9991) (Jeremy J. Kirchman)

Orton's group had crossed the Isthmus of Panama and reached the coastal tropical forest of Guayaquil, Ecuador, in July 1867, later spending 2.5 months in the Quito area, arriving in August and leaving at the end of October 1867. They visited many areas in the Quito valley, including Pichincha (Orton 1870: 133–142) and, although Mindo is not mentioned by Orton, they likely collected the new *Penelope* during this time. In fact, it probably was the species listed by Orton (1871b: 625) as *Ortalida Montagnii* (= *Penelope m. montagnii*) and only later reidentified as *P. greyyi*.

In 1877, Prof. Orton returned to South America but died during the expedition. After his death, the whereabouts of the holotype slipped into obscurity. In the 1920s, known types in the Vassar Collection were sent on long-term loan and later donated to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), but the holotype of *P. ortonii* was not among them. In 1942, Hellmayr & Conover (1942: 145–146) noted that the type was at Vassar College, did not say that they had examined it, but noted that the altitude mentioned by Orton for Mindo, the type locality of *P. ortonii*, was high for this low-altitude species. The altitude given by Paynter (1993) is 1,264 m, and there are specimens of *Penelope ortonii* in AMNH collected subsequently by the Olallas at Mindo.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Dean Amadon was researching cracids for his book with Jean Delacour (Delacour & Amadon 1973: 124, pl. 10, upper right) and James C. Greenway (1973) was looking for types of the family Cracidae that might be in AMNH, the holotype of *P. ortonii* was not found despite considerable correspondence.

As a result of renewed research into the present whereabouts of Vassar specimens by ML & LH, contact was made with JJK, now Curator of Birds at the New York State Museum in Albany, NY (NYSM), which had adopted parts of the Vassar Collection in the 1950s when Dr Ralph Palmer was State Zoologist. During the years 1942–49, with time out for service in World War II, Palmer taught at Vassar and probably realised that valuable specimens were still present in the collection, which was being used for teaching. When he became Zoologist for NYSM in 1949, he arranged to have the more important specimens still at Vassar transferred to Albany. Over 1,100 skins, nearly all collected in New York, were accessioned at that time. It is probable that the holotype of *P. ortonii* found a new home at this time as well, but with no indication of its importance it was stored apart from the main series in a cabinet containing several tropical species that remained unidentified. In 2007, shortly after taking over as Curator, JJK identified and accessioned most of these specimens, including one skin of *P. ortonii* (Fig. 1), with a label only verifying that it had come from Vassar ('Advanced Ornithology 26, Vassar College'), but containing no further data.

So, now 138 years after its description, the holotype of *P. ortonii* has been rediscovered and safely included in the type collection of NYSM as NYSM 9991, a fitting tribute to James Orton, a largely unappreciated early explorer of South America.

In the same paper in which *P. ortonii* was named, Salvin (1874: 323) mentioned that Orton had presented him with the second known specimen of *Icterus graceannae*, collected at Machala, near Guayaquil. The species had been named by Cassin (1867: 52), and the type deposited in the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. The type specimen had been included in a collection of birds mostly from Peru, but also some Ecuadorian and Bolivian birds, so its exact collecting locality could not be stated. Orton's specimen provided a known locality for the species.

I. graceannae had been on some of the lists of type specimens that were to have been sent to AMNH on extended loan, but on at least one of them someone had noted 'not a type'. The collection at AMNH has been searched more than once for this specimen, thinking that perhaps it had come to AMNH as a type, but when its non-type status was discovered, that it had been placed in the regular collection. Because the Salvin-Godman Collection was

deposited in the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) bird collection, now housed at Tring, UK, we inquired of R. Prŷs-Jones whether this specimen had come to Tring with that collection. Prŷs-Jones (*in litt.* 2012) confirmed that it had and is now BMNH 1885.11.2.503 from Machala, Guayaquil, and is listed in Sclater (1886: 378).

Acknowledgements

We thank Robert Prŷs-Jones for sending us the information on Salvin's specimen of *Icterus graceannae*, Thomas Trombone for his help in preparing the photographs for publication, and Robert Prŷs-Jones and Juan Freile for their helpful comments on the manuscript.

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